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ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to answer three basic questions related to the use of teaching portfolios in faculty evaluation and development: (1) "What is a teaching portfolio?"; (2) "How can the teaching portfolio be used to document and facilitate teaching?"; and (3) "How can teaching portfolios be assessed?" The teaching portfolio is seen as encouraging faculty to reflect upon their teaching, document their teaching, and share the "what," "how," and "why" of their teaching with peers. The use of the teaching portfolio in the mentoring process is detailed with information on objectives of mentoring programs, the use of "shadowing" in mentor preparation, and suggested components of three mentoring sessions. Guidelines for teaching portfolio development are offered and include having items which are products of teaching, materials from oneself, and information from others. Discussion of assessment of teaching portfolios includes a sample portfolio assessment sheet. (Contains 14 references.) (DB)

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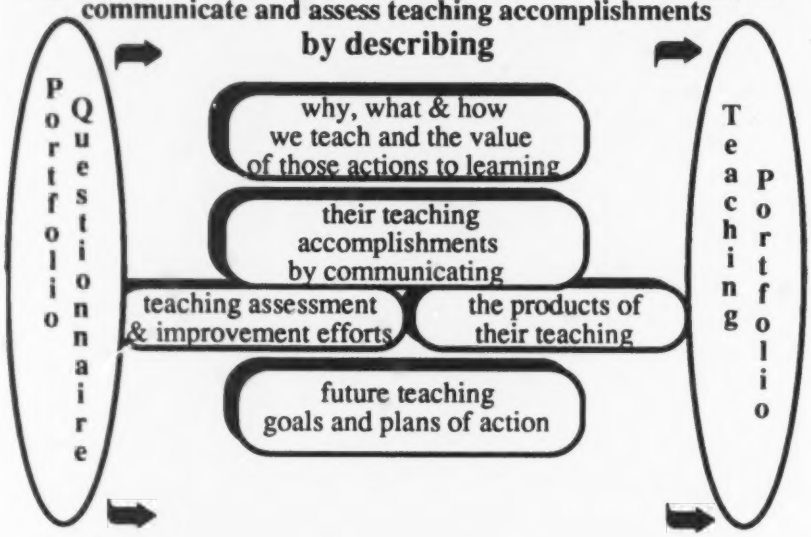
Using Teaching Portfolios to Improve and Assess Teaching

ED 382 147

This paper is based upon a presentation given at the CEDA Conference on Evaluating Faculty Performance: The State of the Practice II, Condado Beach Hotel, San Juan, Puerto Rico, November 8-10, 1994.

Abstract: Teaching portfolios are more than a tool to document teaching. The process of portfolio development encourages faculty to reflect upon and access their teaching practices against their beliefs and communicate accomplishments to others — see Figure. When peers are involved in portfolio development it fosters mentoring, enhances teaching, and strengthens the review process. This paper seeks to answer three basic questions related to teaching portfolios: (1) What is a teaching portfolio?, (2) How can the teaching portfolio be used to document and facilitate teaching?, and (3) How can teaching portfolios be assessed?

The process of developing a teaching portfolio helps faculty to communicate and assess teaching accomplishments by describing


Portfolio Questionnaire
why, what & how we teach and the value of those actions to learning
their teaching accomplishments by communicating
teaching assessment & improvement efforts
the products of their teaching
future teaching goals and plans of action
Teaching Portfolio

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Abstract: Teaching portfolios are more than a tool to document teaching. The process of portfolio development encourages faculty to reflect upon and access their teaching practices against their beliefs and communicate accomplishments to others. When peers are involved in portfolio development it fosters mentoring, enhances teaching, and strengthens the review process. This paper seeks to answer three basic questions related to teaching portfolios: (1) What is a teaching portfolio?, (2) How can the teaching portfolio be used to document and facilitate teaching?, and (3) How can teaching portfolios be assessed?

Introduction

The use of teaching portfolios to improve and assess teaching has increased dramatically over the past five years. While many colleges and universities are currently successfully using portfolios, still others are carefully examining the teaching portfolio concept for the first time. Typically, this examination seeks to answer three basic questions: (1) What is a teaching portfolio?, (2) How can the teaching portfolio be used to document and facilitate teaching?, and (3) How can teaching portfolios be assessed? The information that follows offers new insights into the teaching portfolio concept and these questions.

What is a teaching portfolio?

Seldin (1991) describes a teaching portfolio as a document and set of materials that collectively suggest the scope and quality of a professor's teaching. Hutchings (1994) summarizes teaching portfolios as a coherent set of materials (i.e., samples of work and descriptive narrative) which are representative of one's teaching practices and student learning and development. Still others view teaching portfolios as a strategy or "process" for examining and/or documenting one's teaching practices and accomplishments (Shackelford & Simpson, 1994a). A process that encourages faculty to reflect upon their teaching, and share and communicate: (a) what they teach; (b) how they teach; (c) why they teach as they do; (d) what materials are used to support teaching and learning; (e) the value of selected strategies and materials used to facilitate student learning; (f) what students do to apply, transfer, or integrate what they have learned; (g) information regarding the quality of the teaching/learning experience; and (h) goals or plans for teaching enhancement.

Shulman (1989) suggests effective teachers use strategies that build upon a student's prior knowledge and that good teaching is more than subject matter expertise plus generic methods of teaching. He sets forth the position that teaching involves the transformation of applicable concepts in ways and terms that can be understood by the particular students we teach. Teaching portfolios enhance our ability to examine the richness of this process and to fully appreciate it (Edgerton, 1989).

How can the teaching portfolio be used to document and facilitate teaching?

Currently, several strategies are being used to support teaching portfolio development. These include, but are not limited to, (a) individual faculty writing portfolios in isolation — self-assessment, (b) faculty pairs or peer groups working together on portfolio development, (c) faculty working with experienced portfolio mentors, (d) summer portfolio workshops and writing experiences, and (e) the development of portfolios with the assistance of computer or other interactive programs. In many instances two strategies are joined to reinforce each other and form a powerful strategy for teaching enhancement. These include reflection (i.e., self-assessment) and mentoring.

Many faculty have come to realize that the teaching portfolio (the document) is secondary to the "process" of its development. In other words, the process of developing a teaching portfolio can be more beneficial than the actual portfolio. The "process" of developing a portfolio that involves self-reflection and introspection, a focus on the teaching/learning process, and utilizes mentoring to enhance the dialogue about teaching can support teaching improvement and revitalize an interest in teaching.

Mentoring

When a portfolio is prepared with the help of others it fosters interaction and mentoring. A portfolio mentor interacts with and guides the faculty member (mentee) through the process of developing a portfolio, see Figure 1. S/he facilitates the process, provides constructive feedback, and communicates skillfully through effective questioning and listening. This process promotes discussion about teaching and provides direction. The interaction encourages interdisiplinary and cooperative efforts. When the dialogue is focused on the teaching/learning process (not content) it is a powerful, enlightening, and productive experience. Annis (1993) states that it is important for a mentor to "support" and build upon a mentee's analysis, prioritizing of strategies and accomplishments, and valuing of their teaching actions. This support and advice is similar to the interaction and mentoring that occurs between doctoral student and an advisor during the preparation of a dissertation (Shulman, 1988).

Developing a teaching portfolio with a mentor improves the portfolio and its related outcomes. Many outstanding portfolios are developed each year without the assistance of a portfolio mentor or colleague. However the benefits of doing a portfolio cooperatively are becoming extremely clear. The mentor brings to the process several characteristics that enhance portfolio development and teaching enhancement.

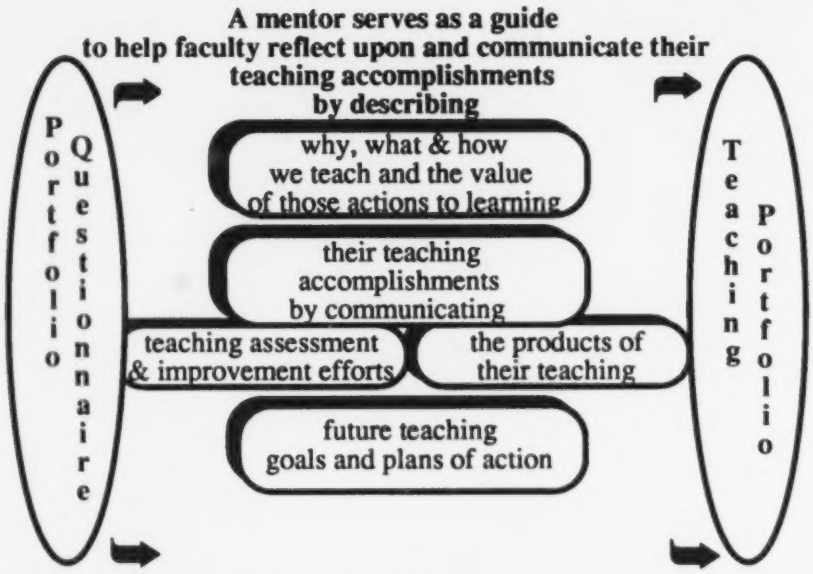

Figure 1: Role of a mentor in teaching portfolio development (Shackelford, 1993).

An increasing number of colleges and universities are developing outstanding portfolio programs. Although each institution has created a process that best matches their identified goals and resources, many mentoring programs build upon the following objectives:

1. To enhance the faculty's understanding of the teaching portfolio concept and its related benefits.
2. To assist faculty in the development of a teaching portfolio that accurately and effectively communicates their teaching accomplishments.
3. To develop future portfolio mentors.

To accomplish these objectives institutions have instituted programs that both enhance portfolio development and the preparation of new portfolio mentors. In many instances, this includes a general presentation followed by three individual portfolio preparation and/or mentoring sessions. During the general presentation, faculty are introduced to the portfolio concept with discussions supporting the position that teaching portfolios are more than a tool to document teaching. Faculty are encouraged to view the process of introspection — as used in portfolio development — as a strategy for them to reflect upon and access their teaching practices against their identified values and beliefs. This process leads to an enhanced ability to communicate identified teaching accomplishments to others.

Following the general session faculty are given the opportunity to develop a portfolio with the assistance of a portfolio mentor. The process often involves three sessions. These include (a) "getting started", (b) "reviewing the second draft", and (c) "examining the second draft and implementing the plan". However, before expanding upon each session, the process of mentor preparation must be addressed.

If one proceeds from the assumption that portfolio development and teaching enhancement can be facilitated through an established mentoring program, one is immediately faced with the following question, "How does a college, university, or

'center for teaching and learning' prepare mentors to assist faculty in portfolio preparation?" Many colleges or universities have found that the process of shadowing is an efficient and effective process for mentor preparation (Shackelford, 1993).

Shadowing is a strategy wherein future mentors observe and interact with an experienced mentor as they assist mentees in portfolio development. The shadow — with the permission of the mentee — reads his/her questionnaire and portfolio drafts, attends all meetings between the mentee and mentor, prepares to discuss the mentee's teaching, and participates by providing additional insights. These activities combined with the shadow's prior knowledge and understanding of teaching enhances his/her mentoring abilities and skills, see Figure 2. Potential mentors are selected based upon their characteristics, understanding of the teaching/learning process, and recognized abilities as effective teachers.

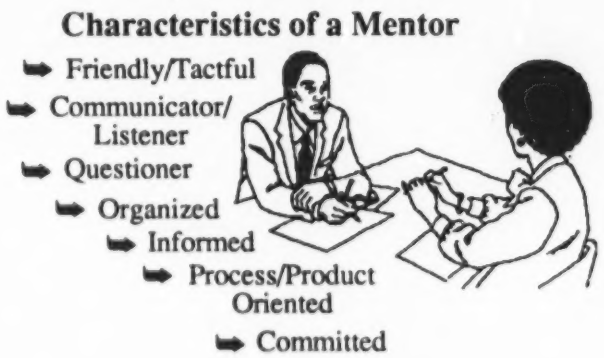

Figure 2: Characteristics and abilities of a teaching portfolio mentor (Shackelford, 1993).

When the portfolio development process is combined with mentor preparation the first session includes "getting started and observing", the second "reviewing the first draft and interacting", and the third "examining the second draft, reversing roles, and implementing the plan" (Shackelford, 1993).

First Session: Getting Started and Observing. The first session is designed to help the mentee get started on the preparation of their first portfolio draft. As shown in Figure 1, the process often begins with a questionnaire. The questionnaire is completed by the mentee and sent to the mentor and shadow for review one week before the session. The portfolio questionnaire fosters communication and understanding between the mentor and mentee. It helps to initiate the process and assist faculty to identify key accomplishments. The questionnaire also aids the mentee's identification of materials (i.e., materials from oneself, products of teaching, and information from others) that can be used to support descriptions of one's teaching abilities, strategies, or accomplishments. It creates a foundation for discussion between the mentor and mentee and helps the mentee focus on the why, what, and how of their teaching and the value of those actions to student learning, see Figure 3.

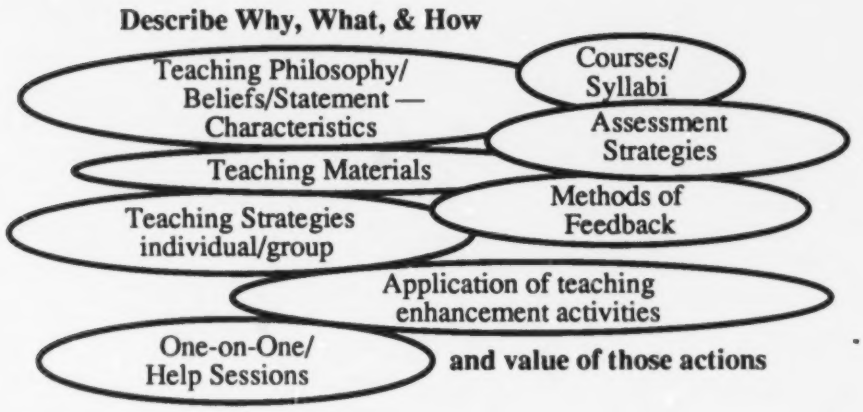

Figure 3: Examples of input from oneself that can be used to document teaching activities and the value of those actions to student learning (Shackelford, 1992).

This session typically lasts 30 minutes and is often the first face-to-face meeting between the mentee, mentor, and shadow. At the beginning of the session the mentor places the mentee at ease, clarifies roles, and reviews portfolio development guidelines. The mentor then discusses the questionnaire with the mentee and asks questions that seek to help the mentee verbalize and operationalize their teaching philosophy, practices, and accomplishments. During discussions the shadow carefully observes the process and notes the questions and strategies employed by the mentor. Following the session, the mentor and shadow often meet to clarify and discuss what has just occurred.

Second Session: Reviewing the First Draft and Interacting. This meeting is approximately 45 minutes in length. Again, materials such as the first portfolio draft, are sent to the mentor and shadow one week before the meeting. Before the meeting, the shadow and mentor independently review and make notes regarding the mentee's draft. The mentor and mentee also cross reference the draft with the questionnaire to identify any inconsistencies or points that may have been accidentally left out of the first draft. Discussions with the mentee focus on the strengths of the draft, areas that may not effectively communicate the author's intentions, and significant points that may have been revealed during the first session but not included in this draft. Recommendations for preparing the second draft are then discussed. Typically these recommendations include asking the mentee to strengthen or clarify what students do in their classes to apply, integrate, or transfer learnings (i.e., products of teaching), see Figure 4.

Towards the conclusion of the second session, the shadow is asked to provide additional insights that were not previously discussed between the mentor and mentee. This encourages the shadow to base their comments upon his/her observations of what has just occurred and provides the mentee with additional input from a second point of view. However, it is the mentor's responsibility to insure that

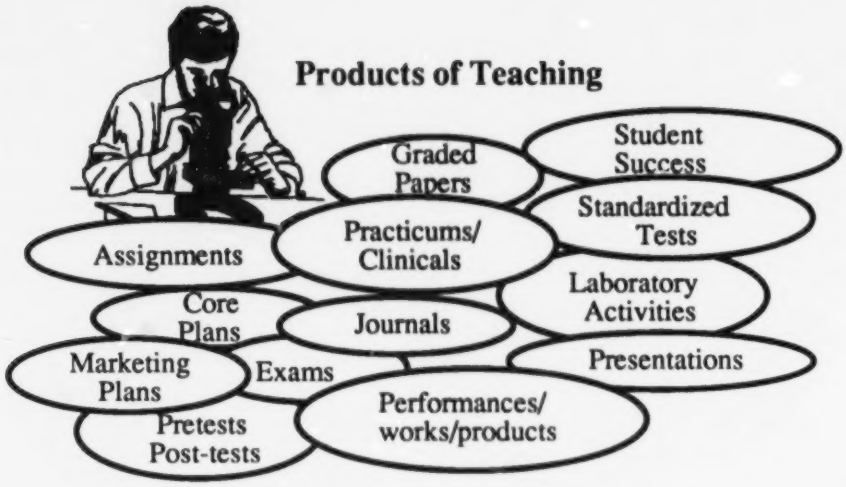

Figure 4: Examples of teaching products that can be used to document teaching accomplishments and how students are encouraged to apply, transfer, or integrate learnings (Shackelford, 1993).

the mentee leaves the session with a clear understanding of the points or recommendations discussed during the session.

Third Session: Reviewing the Second Draft, Reversing Roles, and Implementing the Plan. This is a very important session for both the mentee and shadow. The mentee is starting to come to closure on his/her portfolio narrative and the shadow is honing his/her mentoring skills and abilities. The roles of the shadow and mentor are now reversed by asking the shadow to function as the portfolio mentor — while the mentor observes and provides additional insights. Experience has shown that shadows usually perform extremely well and use techniques discussed and modeled during previous sessions. Prior to the session, the shadow and mentor have thoroughly and independently review the mentee's revised draft and come prepared to discuss it. During ensuing discussions, the shadow provides feedback on the draft and facilitates the clarification and explanation of the faculty members teaching assessment activities and goals, see Figure 5. Once again, the mentor and shadow meet together following the session to clarify and discuss the session.

All teaching portfolios should include a set of goals or a plan for teaching enhancement. When goals or teaching enhancement plans are developed as an integral part of the teaching portfolio, the teaching portfolio becomes a significant tool for supporting improved teaching. A key element in portfolio development is the process of self-reflection and introspection faculty go through as they develop their portfolio. When one's teaching is carefully analyzed, even the most successful teacher discovers areas or points that can be enhanced. Goals are typically derived from these points and support the development of desirable new strategies and/or improvement of existing strategies, see Figure 6.

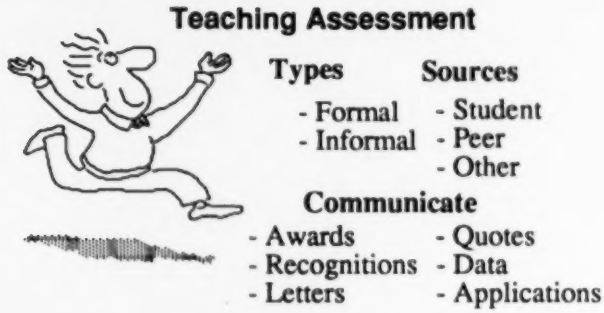

Figure 5: Points to be considered when documenting teaching assessment and application activities (Shackelford, 1993).

Mentors often recommend that the number of goals be limited to two or three to allow faculty to focus on the planned improvement efforts. It then becomes imperative that faculty receive appropriate support from their institution (i.e., center for teaching and learning) as they pursue their goals and implement their teaching enhancement plan.

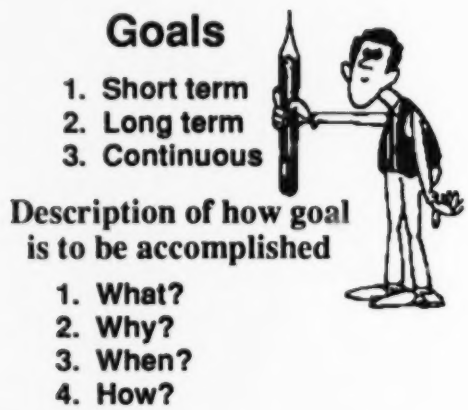

Figure 6: Common goals identified during the teaching portfolio process (Shackelford, 1993).

As shown, mentoring plays a key role in successful portfolio development and teaching enhancement. Writing a teaching portfolio with a mentor greatly enhances the portfolio and its related teaching enhancement outcomes. A mentor guides faculty through the process of portfolio development and facilitates the process by providing direction and maintaining focus. Mentors are non-judgmental, encourage discussion through the effective use of probing questions and guide mentees through a series of planned tasks or activities, see Figure 7. Strongly consider

establishing a strong mentoring program to support teaching portfolio development and related teaching enhancement activities at your institution.

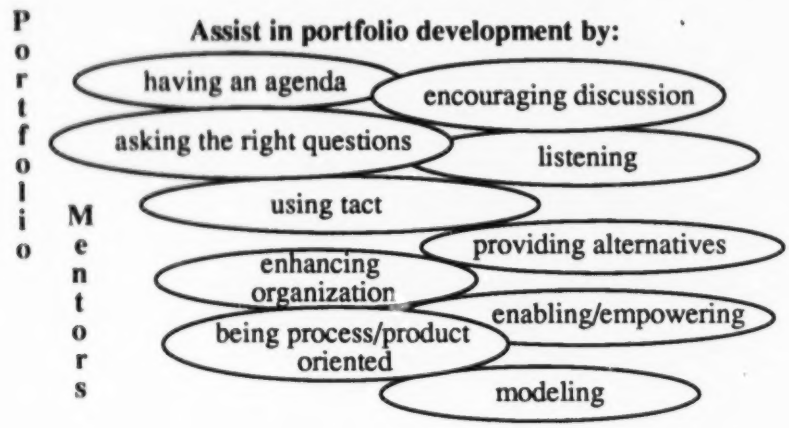

Figure 7: Tasks/activities used by mentors to facilitate portfolio development (Shackelford, 1994a).

Guidelines for Teaching Portfolio Development

One of the portfolio's major advantages is that there are no specific guidelines or requirements exist for preparing one. This gives faculty the opportunity to mold a document that best communicates their teaching practices and accomplishments. However, based upon their experiences, faculty who have successfully developed strong portfolios provide the following suggestions for others in the early stages of portfolio development (Shackelford, 1994b):

1. Clarify the purpose for doing a portfolio (i.e., self-improvement, promotion, tenure, etc.). A portfolio written for the purpose of self-improvement is read only by the author. Whereas, a portfolio for promotion or tenure will be read by others and may require more clarity and sharing of teaching accomplishments.
2. The narrative body of the teaching portfolio should be approximately six to eight pages (double spaced) in length, plus appendices (i.e., 2 - 3 inch ring binder of support materials).
3. Be selective and include items that are most appropriate for communicating teaching strategies and accomplishments. Typically, these items fall into three categories: (a) products of teaching, (b) materials from oneself, and (c) information from others. Maintain a balance in the materials used by including appropriate examples and documentation from:
   a. Products of teaching (i.e., student work, evidence of student learning, or ability of students to apply and/or evaluate what they have learned),
   b. Materials from oneself (i.e., syllabi, statement of teaching philosophy or beliefs, teaching materials, methods of student assessment, or steps to improve teaching), and
   c. Information from others (i.e., student evaluations, letters, honors, or teaching related committee work).

4. Present material professionally and arrange it so that the reader can progress through it easily.
5. Consider illustrating large quantities of information graphically (i.e., a summary of student evaluations or teaching improvement over the years).
6. Contemplate including selected examples of items (i.e., student comments or sample exam questions) found in the appendices in the narrative of the portfolio.
7. Be sure to examine and/or share with the reader:
   a. your teaching philosophy or statement of teaching beliefs,
   b. what you teach and why,
   c. how you teach and with what,
   d. behaviors that make you an effective teacher,
   e. the value of your teaching actions to student learning,
   f. activities or experiences used to encourage students to apply, transfer, integrate, or evaluate what they have learned,
   g. what students, peers, and/or others say about your teaching,
   h. how you stay current in your field, enhance your teaching effectiveness, and how these activities are integrated into your teaching, and
   i. your future teaching goals and enhancement efforts.
8. Collect/maintain records or materials that could be used in the appendices to support statements in the narrative (i.e., student evaluations, products of good teaching, letters, or peer evaluations).
9. Remember, the appendices may include non-print items such as photos of student work or videos of teaching or student activities/productions.

Mentors frequently suggest that before submitting their portfolios faculty consider having others read and comment on them. They often recommend using three readers: (a) one from your department, (b) one from outside the department, and (c) one non-educator. They further suggest that after the readers have read the draft portfolio that faculty ask them specific questions concerning the portfolio. The use of specific questions are recommended instead of general questions, because specific questions elicit detailed responses. Consider asking questions such as (Shackelford, 1994b):

a. What is my teaching philosophy and future goals?
b. What do I teach and why?
c. What characteristics make me an effective teacher?
d. What do my students, peers, or others say about my teaching?
e. How do I teach and what kinds of materials do I use to support student learning?
f. What is the value of my teaching strategies to student learning?
g. What do students do in my classes to apply, integrate, and transfer what they have learned?

If the readers of your portfolio are able to positively respond to these and similar questions, then you have a document that effectively describes and communicates your teaching accomplishments. If the readers have difficulty responding to a particular question, then you may want to review that portion of your portfolio to improve its ability to communicate.

How can teaching portfolios be assessed?

Assessment of teaching has always been a problematic issue. During a recent workshop on teaching portfolio assessment (Shackelford & Simpson, 1994b), discussions emphasized that no one "universally" accepted method for evaluating teaching existed. However, participants pointed out that since a portfolio is a body of materials that collectively communicate teaching accomplishments/effectiveness, it has several advantages over traditional methods of assessing teaching (i.e., only student evaluations). Participants identified several items common to many portfolios. These items included: syllabi, description of teaching/learning strategies, student/peer/self evaluations, examples of student work, description of efforts to enhance teaching, one's teaching philosophy, teaching videos, etc. It was emphasized that it is the sum of these items — in total — that supports a description of one's teaching, not any one item.

Following a hands-on portfolio assessment activity lead by Shackelford and Simpson (1994b) participants identified several points taken into consideration during their assessment of five identified portfolio abstracts. ***(Note**: The use of teaching portfolio abstracts is never recommended for portfolio assessment purposes. Abstracts were used during the portfolio assessment workshop activity because of limitedtime restrictions.)* Some of the identified points included effective descriptions of: student learning, teaching initiatives, course planning, student evaluations, peer assessments, positive student outcomes, course materials, a clear philosophy, good teacher characteristics, flexibility in teaching, positive attitude toward teaching, teaching awards received, fairness to students, appropriateness of learning assessment procedures, and goal setting and teaching improvement activities. Now this list is not all inclusive. Nor does it represent all the points discussed. It does, however, reflect the results of faculty from a variety of institutions. Each institution must develop its own assessment strategies that best fit their institution, mission, and portfolio guidelines.

Although portfolio assessment guidelines differ widely from institution to institution there appears to be two common forms or strategies. One strategy takes into consideration elements or activities that have been traditionally shown to reflect or effect good teaching practices such as: course planning, teacher knowledge, teaching assignment, instructional strategies, attention to learning, instructional materials, advising, and teaching evaluations.

Another strategy takes into consideration recommended teaching portfolio development guidelines that reflect or communicate information regarding effective teaching practices and accomplishments. These points include items such as: teaching philosophy, teaching responsibilities or assignments, instructional strategies used, student assignments and learning experiences, teaching assessment activities, teaching improvement activities, teaching related and professional activities, and goals for future teaching improvement.

Whichever strategy or points are to be taken into consideration during portfolio assessment, an assessment form or summary sheet is necessary for guiding the assessment process and insuring common guidelines are used by each evaluator. The portfolio assessment summary sheet shown in Figure 8 is one such instrument. As shown, an institution's approved set of "consideration points" can be plugged into the summary sheet (left column) and then reviewed by examining related accomplishments, sources of information, description and type of support

information provided, and type and quality of documentation supporting the teaching accomplishments.

When considering the use of teaching portfolios as a basis for personnel decisions, the identification of teaching portfolio assessment guidelines is an important step. However, institutions must be careful not "to put the cart before the horse." A cadre of faculty who have developed their own portfolios should be developed first. Then these individuals should be made key players in the development of any portfolio assessment guidelines. Because, it can be very time consuming, frustrating, and non-productive when portfolio assessment guidelines are developed by those who have not written their own portfolios. Using one's best, most experienced, and informed faculty, each institution must develop guidelines that best fit their institution, mission, and portfolio development guidelines.

Portfolio Assessment Summary Sheet

	Information Describing/Supporting Accomplishments			
Consideration Points	Accomplish-ment(s)	Source(s) of Information	Description/ Support	Quality of Documentation
i.e., Teaching philosophy		✓ Course Mat'ls		
Student outcomes		✓ Students (present/ alumni)		
Teaching assessment		✓ Teacher's Comments		
Instructional strategies & materials		✓ Peers		
		✓ Admin.		
Teacher characteristics		✓ Instruct. Consultant		
		Fink, 1993		

Figure 8: Portfolio assessment summary sheet (Shackelford, 1994).

Summary

Teaching portfolios are more than a tool to document teaching effectiveness. The process of introspection used in the development of a portfolio enables faculty to reflect upon and access their practices against their values and beliefs, and share their teaching accomplishments with others. To enhance the effectiveness of this

process, colleges and universities should foster the development of trained mentors. Mentors who (a) have developed their own portfolios, (b) possess the characteristics of a good teacher and mentor, and (c) understand and are skilled in using the mentoring process to enhance portfolio development.

By examining one's own philosophy, beliefs, and teaching practices and accomplishments one can gain great insights into their teaching. On the basis of the reflective practices and discussions about teaching (i.e., the heart of the "teaching portfolio processes"), faculty often sense a revitalized interest in teaching and establish future goals for self-improvement and teaching enhancement activities.

Teaching portfolios can capture the complexities of teaching, promote reflective practices, and foster a culture of teaching and a new discourse about it (Edgerton, 1991). Guidelines for assessing teaching portfolios should be developed by knowledgeable faculty who have prepared their own portfolios. When these guidelines are used to support the design of portfolio assessment or information summary sheets they enhance and standarize the evaluation process.

When one senior, full professor was asked, "Why did they do a teaching portfolio?" He replied, "In teaching, improvement can only be made by means of an honest assessment (self, student, and peer) of one's teaching performance. The teaching portfolio is a concrete assessment and planning document for that purpose--I simply wish I had adopted this approach about twenty years ago--my students would have benefited greatly."

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